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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ANKARA 000839

NOFORN
SIPDIS

FOR GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS FROM AMBASSADOR JIM JEFFREY

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER: YOUR VISIT TO TURKEY

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Jeffrey for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Dave, thanks for taking the time to come to Turkey. Building on President Obama's and Secretary Clinton's landmark visits earlier this year, your trip will further underscore our recognition of Turkey as an essential partner in practically every mission we seek to accomplish in this region, most of which are in your AOR. We are getting strong support from Turkey on Iraq, Afghanistan and the Caucasus region. While there is from time to time divergence on approach, Turkey strongly supports our goals in the Middle East, on pressing Iran to cease its program to develop nuclear technology and on speeding up development of an East-West energy corridor. Turkey's primary security focus continues to be its counter-insurgency effort against the PKK. This operation, which is becoming a broader whole-of-government all-lines-of-operation effort, overshadows other tasks and also limits the resources which Turkey could devote to other operations. The Turks will express appreciation for the strong support they receive through our sharing of actionable real-time intelligence so they can attack PKK terrorists where they hide, in northern Iraq. Your people at MNF-I, together with the EUCOM folks, are doing extraordinary work in this Joint operation which crosses CO-COM boundaries.

12. (C) Our (and your) agenda is huge here, and the cable is therefore long. But a few key suggestions:

Be Sure To Raise:

- Commitment to our intel and other support for strikes against the PKK (para 3-4);
- Encouragement for improved ties with Iraq, especially with the KRG and Barzani (para 5-6);
- Appreciation for Turkey's efforts on Afghanistan/Pakistan (para 8)

Watch Out For

- Basbug pressing on direct U.S. milops against PKK (para 4)
- Complaints about provision of attack helicopters and armed UAVs (para 13)
- Turkish threats, were the U.S. to use "genocide" term referring to incidents of 1915 (para 11).

PKK

13. (C) Turkey's counter-insurgency effort against the PKK has evolved in the past year and has expanded beyond military action alone. The government has increased social and economic support to ethnic Kurds in southeast Turkey, has dramatically broadened the rights of Kurds to use their own language and increased educational opportunities as well. I'll be in Diyarbakir Wednesday to see the situation first hand. Turkey is developing a new government structure to provide leadership and oversight to the "whole of government" effort to counter the PKK, and we are pleased that Turks are consulting with us to this end. Still, most of the focus remains on the effort to attack PKK terrorists using military force.

14. (S) President Bush's November 2007 decision to share operational intelligence was a turning point for the bilateral relationship. President Obama's declaration, in his speech to the Turkish Parliament, of our continuing commitment to support Turkey's fight against the PKK was warmly welcomed. Turkey's military leaders value this intel and the advice our military leaders give them. Our work together has made it difficult for PKK terrorists to use northern Iraq as a safe haven. Turkish casualties are still occurring, unfortunately, and an increasing proportion are from IEDs. One problem is the growing pressure by GEN Basbug and his TGS to "finish off" the PKK this year, which they believe requires direct U.S. milops against the PKK, or at

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the very least, significant U.S. pressure on the KRG to take any one of a number of actions to isolate the PKK.

IRAQ

15. (C) Turkey's high-profile political engagement with Iraq has done much to help further Iraq's development as a sovereign state and to develop good-neighborly relations. President Gul visited Iraq in March 2009, the first Turkish president to visit in 35 years. When you arrive, Foreign Minister Davutoglu will have just returned from a four-day, five-city trip to Iraq, including a stop in Erbil. Turkey was essential in our push to get the Iraqi parliament to approve our Security Agreement. Turkey signed a low-level military-to-military agreement with Iraq in early June, allowing for officer exchanges and training. The Turks have excellent relations with all the Iraqi political players.

Northern Iraq

16. (C) Turkey will not consider any alternative to the political unity and territorial integrity of Iraq, but has in the past six months become much more flexible to how it engages "the local authorities of northern Iraq" (how Turkey refers officially to the KRG). Turkey's policy remains focused on the government in Baghdad, but its outreach to the KRG is expanding. (It is reinforced by the continued dominance of Turkish products and investments in the KRG's healthy economy.) The U.S. - Turkey - Iraq Tripartite Security talks continue regularly and a new Tripartite office in Erbil to share counter-PKK intelligence will become operational later this month. Turkish military officials have become more strident in their calls for KRG officials to take action against the PKK, and are becoming more impatient with statements without action. Renewing the full-bore export of hydrocarbons from Iraq through Turkey is essential to making permanent Iraq's links to the West.

U.S. Drawdown Through Turkey

¶7. (C) You know how important Turkey's Habur Gate and the Incirlik Cargo Hub have been to our sustainment operations. They could be helpful in our drawdown as well. Minister of National Defense Vecdi Gonul suggested that Turkey was ready to agree to increased use of Incirlik for this purpose when he met with Secretary Gates on June 3. Using the surface route from Habur Gate to Turkey's Mediterranean ports is worth exploring as well, but here the rough terrain, the security environment and the cantankerous nature of the Turkish government bureaucracy will challenge any U.S. operation. We are already working with your logisticians to evaluate these options.

Afghanistan/Pakistan

¶8. (C) Turkey stepped up to the plate at the NATO Summit, pledging a significant increase in their troop deployment and an important financial contribution to reconstruction as well as to election prep efforts. Turkey cites as one of its main advantages the ability to use its "soft power" to support NATO's goals, building on the trust gained from its shared cultural and historical heritage. We couldn't agree more. During his May 18 meeting in Istanbul and again on June 1 in Washington, Special Envoy Dick Holbrooke pressed Turkey to step up its diplomatic, political, economic/reconstruction, and military training activities, in close coordination with the US. Holbrooke also stressed the value of Turkey sharing its counter-insurgency experience with Pakistan, given strong Turkey - Pakistan ties. Turkey is already increasing its engagement, but we will have to nurture this effort with senior-level engagement from visits like yours.

Syria

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¶9. (S/NF) Turkish leaders appreciated being consulted about CENTCOM's plans to engage with Damascus and broadly support the ideas behind the decision. Turkey's relationship with Syria has improved, and while there are still areas of the border which are mined, they have limited mil-to-mil ties. You should expect Turkey to offer concrete support; its expertise in developing Syria's capability to manage its border might be useful. Turkey's work last year to facilitate talks between Israel and Syria was helpful and should be renewed.

Iran

¶10. (C) With a seat on the UN Security Council and another at the IAEA Board of Governors, Turkey's support in international diplomacy is essential to our success. Turkey shares our concern about Iran's nuclear ambitions, but is hesitant to use harsh language in public statements which it believes could close the door to dialogue. Nevertheless, they are a strong partner in our non-proliferation efforts, with several significant results. Politically, Turkey will try to position itself on Iran between wherever we are and where Russia is. In a pinch of if pressed, the Turks will slant to us.

Caucasus

¶11. (C) Turkey has taken important steps toward opening its closed border with Armenia. This issue is politically charged on both sides, is linked to the 1915 "genocide" issue (which you should avoid at all costs), but is also tied by the Turks to the resolution of the Armenia - Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Turkey seeks to develop as a regional power, and recognizes that the Caucasus region, stymied in its growth by frozen conflicts, could turn to Turkey for development. Turkey's diplomatic reflex is to

engage in dialogue; the timing of its "Caucasus Strategic Cooperation Platform" right after the Russian invasion of Georgia last year struck a sour note with us, but may yet prove to be productive. On the "genocide" issue, Turkey consistently warns that any U.S. determination of the events of 1915 as "genocide" would set off a political firestorm in Turkey, and the devastating effect on our bilateral relations -- including political, military and commercial aspects -- would be unavoidable.

Counter Piracy

¶12. (C) Turkey is a member of the Contact Group on Somali Piracy, currently holds command of CTF-151 and has a frigate with helo embarked deployed to the region. Turkey supports deployment of NATO's maritime group to the area and has pledged an additional naval vessel to deploy with this group.

One problem is its opposition to Cyprus membership in the anti-piracy group.

UAVs and Attack Helicopters

¶13. (C) While senior Turks should understand that neither of these issues are your responsibility, they are such a high priority that the subject may come up. Turkey seeks to acquire, on an urgent basis, its own UAV capability. The administration has made clear that we support this goal in principle, and Turkey has pending requests to acquire armed Predator and Reaper UAVs. Provided these sales win Congressional approval, the delivery pipeline for these systems is long, and Turkey's leaders have sought reassurance that we will not pull our intel support until they can replace it. Bad procurement decisions led Turkey to a severe shortage of attack helicopters, desperately needed for its fight against the PKK. Turkey has looked to us to help them bridge this capability gap, asking to purchase additional AH-1W Super Cobra aircraft. These aircraft are in short supply in our own inventory, but Secretary Gates and VCJCS Cartwright have found a way to support this request within a

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few years (four each in 2011, 2012 and 2013), the best we can do.

Political Environment

¶14. (C) PM Erdogan's Islamist-leaning Justice and Development (AK) Party is squarely in the driver's seat. It lost some ground in a March local election, but its parliamentary majority is solid and the opposition is fractured. Civilian - military relations remain complex. Chief of Staff General Ilker Basbug has worked out a modus vivendi with PM Erdogan, but the long-running struggle between Turkey's secularists (with the Army their fer-de-lance) and Islamists (represented by the government) naturally puts them at odds. Erdogan has the clear upper hand, a fact that Basbug seems to have learned to live with. Alleged past military involvement in coup contingency planning or even deliberate generation of internal chaos remains political theme number one and preoccupies both Basbug and Erdogan.

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JEFFREY